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***The Gilman Report:
Looking beyond
World War II***

-Aaron Isaacs

The double hit of automobile competition in the 1920s, followed by the Great Depression, dropped TCRT's ridership from its all time ridership high of 238 million passengers in 1920 to 100 million by 1933. It stayed at about that level for the rest of the 1930s and all the way through 1941.

Then came the war and everything changed. Gasoline and rubber tires were rationed to supply the war effort. Auto manufacturing ceased as auto plants were converted to defense work. The ridership returned as employment surged while auto use was effectively restricted.

Here's what happened to ridership.

1941	105,941,868
1942	128,924,943
1943	173,280,103
1944	185,222,547
1945	193,857,264
1946	201,527,022

Rationing did not end until 1946.

In 1944 the end of the war was in sight. Realizing that big changes would probably follow, TCRT hired the engineering firm W. C. Gilman & Company to assess TCRT's current situation and recommend changes for the postwar period. We have a copy of their report. It's a trove of good data about the company, a snapshot of that point in time, and contains a set of recommendations for the future.

In 1944 TCRT served a metro area of

about 850,000 (it's over 3 million today), and over 90 percent of that population was within the Minneapolis and St. Paul city limits. In the peak ridership year of 1920, there was one auto for every 8.2 persons. By 1943 that number was one for every 3.6 persons, a number barely changed since 1936. Gilman found that Twin Cities auto ownership per capita was above the national average. Of the 30 U. S. cities over 300,000, only eight had more cars per capita than the Twin Cities.

From the oft-quoted peak number of 523 track miles in 1931, track miles had shrunk to 444. That reflected the abandonment of the Stillwater and Minnetonka lines, plus the conversion to bus of the Kenwood, St. Louis Park, Bryn Mawr, 6th Avenue N., Franklin Avenue, Cedar Shuttle, Merriam Park Shuttle, Western Avenue Shuttle, Jackson Street, Hope Street and South Robert Street lines. In 1941 buses carried 10 percent of the system ridership.

In 1944, when the report was written, there were 704 streetcars in the fleet. Only 151 of them (21 percent) still required a two-man crew. The rest had been rebuilt to be operated by a motor-man only, conductor optional. Their average age was 30.5 years, but that doesn't reflect the fact that most had been completely rebuilt and also cycled through the shop for overhaul every five years.

In 1944, TCRT owned 221 buses, the oldest dating from 1932, with an average fleet age of 3.4 years. At this point in the development of buses, all had gasoline engines. Diesels weren't on the scene yet and because of that, bus size and seating capacity maxed out at

36, while streetcars seated about 45. That meant that buses of the era were too small to replace streetcars one-for-one in heavy service, but that would change after the war.

There were six streetcar barns, called "stations" in TCRT parlance, with a capacity for 875 streetcars. The buses were housed at garages in downtown Minneapolis and downtown St. Paul, plus 24 buses at Nicollet Station.

The consultant rates TCRT

After laying out the inventory of TCRT assets, the report evaluated the system. It received high marks in almost every area. Here are some excerpts from the text, slightly edited. With the exception of outmoded power generating equipment, the evaluation was quite positive.

Our conclusions are that all of the property has been well maintained. Trackwork is in good condition and no unusual amount of deferred maintenance exists. The system's street cars, although not of the most modern design, have been kept up in exceptionally good physical and operating condition so that they present a good appearance on the street, and have better than average operating characteristics. Its motor bus fleet, as compared to other transit properties, has a low average age and has been exceptionally well maintained.

While the car house buildings are old, their outward appearance is good and they provide ample quarters well adapted to the functions which they house, and the garage buildings are in good physical condition. All these structures are well located from the standpoint of both present and future operations.

The Snelling Shops, while constructed

Front cover: The Minnesota Railfans Association chartered the last streetcar into downtown St. Paul, a day after service was abandoned on University Avenue. They paused at the state capitol for photos. See page 8 for more on MRA fan trips. Bob Selle photo.
Inside front cover: The March 7, 1954 MRA fan trip with gate car 1269 prepares to leave East Side Station.

many years ago, are well laid out, and are unusually well equipped and provide exceptional facilities for maintenance and construction work.

The building housing the steam generating plant, although built 40 years ago, is well designed. Except for the 20,000 kw horizontal turbine and three high pressure boilers, the installed equipment is out of date and not suitable for dependable or efficient continuous operation.

The substation buildings are well designed for their functions, and their locations together with the layout of the transmission and distribution systems are well suited to the power requirements of the system.

The present physical and operating condition of the system's property is due, in our opinion, primarily to the well planned and efficiently carried out maintenance procedures of the company.

Track

The system has carried on a normal schedule of track reconstruction, except for the year 1943 when the shortage of materials and manpower made such a program impossible.

Annual Track Rebuilding

Year	Miles
1936	8.8
1937	7.8
1938	.4
1939	3.3
1940	2.5
1941	2.6
1942	2.1
1943	.3

Passenger Equipment

The system has adhered to a rehabilitation program under which all street cars are rebuilt approximately every 5 years. This program consists of completely disassembling the street car which includes the removal of all electrical and other equip-

ment, sash and siding; the inspection and repair where necessary of steel work, wiring, wainscoting, posts and roofs; interior and exterior painting; and the complete rebuilding of trucks, motors, controls, etc.

Rehabbed cars per year

1939	150
1940	140
1941	142
1942	176
1943	152

Ordinary maintenance, such as brake adjustments and inspection and cleaning are carried out at the 6 car stations. Every 14 days each car is inspected as to lubrication and condition of truck equipment, control equipment, pneumatic equipment, etc. When major units are found defective, the car is sent to the (Snelling) shops.

The transit industry for the last few years has been handicapped in its ability to maintain equipment because of the shortage of necessary parts. The Twin City system has been fortunate, however, because it has been in a position to manufacture at its Snelling Shops many of the replacement parts needed.

We have examined the list of street car parts and bus parts manufactured at the shops. We find that the cost of these items vary from about 20% to about 71% of the current purchasing costs.

Trolley Wire

The overhead trolley wire is inspected regularly and replacements are made when the remaining cross-sectional area is 50% of the original size. Trolley ears and fittings are replaced on the basis of regular inspections. In heavy traffic areas, the overhead equipment is inspected every 2 months, and in sections outside of the loop area, such inspections are made every 4 months. The system has been able to maintain a normal replacement program for trolley wire and appurtenances.

	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943
Car miles operated	21,235,734	21,098,675	20,632,645	22,263,503	25,234,934
Trolley wire replaced (feet)	84,908	121,440	100,880	66,000	92,300
Trolley ears replaced	11,062	12,250	10,586	8,440	12,567
Miles per ear	1,926	1,719	1,951	2,636	2,009
Number trolley breaks	16	30(storm)	15	13	19
Trolley breaks charged to failure of equipment	6	5	10	9	10
Number of interruptions at generating plants*	1	4	2	1	1
Average length of interruption (minutes)	8	9	15	7	6
Total cables repaired	34	18	34	14	18
Total found by meggering	25	13	15	9	12
Total cable failures	9	5	19†	5	6
Total feet of cable installed as replacement	16,424	4,266	4,520	2,010	5,630

* Principally caused by transmission cable trouble at night when the steam station is shut down and the water power plants are carrying the load.

† One burnout caused 11 failures.

Power generation

TCRT faced a challenge with its obsolete power generating equipment. According to the report, "Because of their age, the three vertical generators in the steam plant present a real operating hazard."

There were two options available—replace the generators, or buy electricity from Northern States Power. The latter would have been a good option, except that TCRT's system used 35 cycle AC power, while NSP was 60 cycle.

According to the report, "An interconnection of the two systems would

require a substantial investment in frequency changers, or in new converters designed to operate on 60 cycle energy. Some such investment could be justified if power could be purchased at a sufficiently low cost, but the existing applicable rate schedule of Northern States Power does not produce such an average cost. We understand that Northern States is unwilling to sell energy at any rate below the existing applicable schedule."

TCRT never successfully resolved the issue of its obsolete electric generating system, and in the end that contributed to the elimination of street cars.

Year	Total Net Generation Kwh - (000)	Average Net Kwh Output per Car Mile Operated (a)	Maximum Daily Load in Kw		Annual Load Factor Based on Maximum Kwh Demand
			Minimum (Summer Operation)	Maximum (Winter Operation)	
1939	115,504	5.48	26,200	40,160	32.9%
1940	116,516	5.62	26,500	41,950	31.7
1941	113,018	5.53	25,500	40,310	32.1
1942	124,213	5.63	29,650	42,970	33.0
1943	143,128	5.72	32,600	45,510	36.0%

(a) Including all power use for shops, car stations, and certain bus garages.

Operations and ridership

From a financial standpoint the war was good for TCRT. From 1941 to 1943 ridership increased 64 percent. TCRT increased service as much as possible to handle this load. They couldn't increase the number of streetcars in the fleet, but the fleet had been underutilized. The number of streetcars deployed daily increased from 522 in 1941 to 675 in 1943. They were able to do this only by reducing the number of streetcars kept in reserve for maintenance and repairs, the "spare factor". They were able to increase the number of revenue streetcar miles by 23 percent. Buses were a different story. They purchased 90 new buses.

New buses and more hours of streetcar service meant more employees were needed. At the same time many TCRT employees were headed off to war. In July 1943 TCRT began hiring women to run streetcars and work in the shop.

It helped that TCRT had low operating costs. The consultant compared them to the transit systems in nine other comparably sized cities and found TCRT's costs to be the lowest. Interestingly, the report shows the average employee's wages increased 35% from 1941 to 1943, because employees were working so much overtime. Overtime didn't start until after 48 hours in the week. This led to

an "overtime strike" in November 1943, that almost crippled the system. TCRT relented and shortened the straight time work week to 44 hours. It also granted a 3 cents per hour pay increase, retroactive to January 1, 1943. The regular work week remained six days.

Ridership increased faster than TCRT could add service on the street. The number of passengers per streetcar mile increased by a third from 6.6 to 8.7. Bus ridership per mile also increased from 2.7 to 3.9, which gives you an idea of how much more productive streetcar routes were compared to bus routes. As the table at right shows, the three most productive lines, Selby-Lake, Minneapolis-St. Paul via University Avenue and Glenwood-4th Avenue S., exceeded 11 passengers per car mile. It's no surprise that passenger revenues increased about 70%. TCRT was making money. The operating ratio, which shows profitability, improved from 72% in 1941 to 63% in 1943. That means expenses consumed only 63% of revenues.

The consultant's report uses data from 1943. Ridership rose for three more years, and was 16% higher in 1946.

Department	Average Number of Employees		
	1938	1941	1943
Maintenance of Way	156	187	171
Mechanical	446	397	454
Power	146	154	149
Operating	1,405	1,279	1,482
Executive - Office - Stores	155	154	173
Bus Division - All Departments	222	294	359
Total	2,630	2,465	2,788

Table 1							
Street Car Lines							
Name of Line	One Way Route Miles	Car Miles Operated in 1000's		Total Passen- gers Carried per Car Mile		Revenue in Cents per Car Mile	
		1943	1941	1943	1941	1943	1941
Street Car Lines in Minneapolis							
Chicago - Penn. & Fremont	5.67	1,795.4	2,480.6	7.9	8.5	44.4	50.9
Nicollet - 2nd St. N. E.	5.96	1,256.3	1,580.3	7.2	9.8	44.3	56.8
Bryant - Johnson	12.60	1,137.3	1,459.0	6.3	8.1	37.5	47.9
Minnehaha - Plymouth - Ft. Snelling	8.75	1,016.7	1,131.3	5.5	7.6	28.5	40.5
28th Ave. So. - Robbinsdale (a)	13.20	836.1	1,052.3	5.6	7.7	32.2	42.8
4th Ave. So. - No. Bryant	7.07	832.2	1,041.2	5.1	7.0	26.7	37.3
Bloomington - Columbia Heights	5.83	933.3	1,038.3	5.9	8.5	31.4	46.1
Oak-Harriet	6.48	821.4	886.6	6.6	8.8	38.1	51.9
Glenwood - 4th Ave. So.	4.60	605.9	825.8	7.7	11.8	44.4	61.1
Grand - Monroe	11.59	566.5	660.8	6.0	9.4	36.4	52.5
6th Ave. No. - East 25th St.	8.04	488.4	603.0	4.2	5.9	24.6	34.2
Broadway	3.45	180.1	180.6	3.6	6.2	16.5	29.9
28th Ave. So. - No. Emerson	3.78 (b)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fort Snelling Sub	1.07 (b)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Inter Campus	3.61 (b)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Northwestern Terminal	2.80 (b)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Street Car Lines in St. Paul							
Randolph-Wahtomedi (a)	13.35	988.0	1,199.3	5.3	7.2	31.9	44.3
Rice - So. St. Paul	6.99	642.8	848.6	5.4	7.6	33.0	47.4
St. Clair - Payne	4.98	647.5	804.8	6.0	7.5	36.1	45.5
Grand - Mississippi	5.35	657.0	737.5	5.6	7.6	33.3	46.1
Fort Snelling - Maria	7.48	650.3	716.5	4.2	5.9	25.4	36.6
Hamline - Cherokee Heights	5.32	542.3	671.0	6.1	8.1	37.4	49.6
Dale-Forest	4.72	525.5	545.3	6.0	9.5	34.1	49.8
Snelling-Crosstown	5.26	383.8	460.6	5.4	9.4	22.7	32.0
Rondo-Stryker	2.93	286.9	302.8	5.4	8.1	33.2	45.5
Western Avenue	(c)	27.9	-	4.0	-	14.3	-
Street Car Lines Operating in both Minneapolis & St. Paul							
Coso-Harriet-Hopkins (a)	22.49	1,719.0	2,077.4	6.1	8.3	36.3	50.4
Selby-Lake	10.81	1,573.1	2,012.7	9.3	12.0	43.8	58.3
Minneapolis - St. Paul	10.36	1,328.2	1,745.3	8.8	11.5	49.8	68.1
System Total - Street Car (d)		20,441.9	25,001.6	6.6	8.7	36.6	49.6
% Increase 1943 over 1941		-	22.2%	-	31.8%	-	35.5%
(a) Includes Suburban line operations:							
Robbinsdale		89.2	114.9	5.3	8.1	16.8	25.5
Wahtomedi		142.2	146.4	2.4	4.4	14.2	26.2
Hopkins		104.2	107.5	2.8	5.6	17.2	35.3
(b) Operations included in other lines.							
(c) Operation discontinued in 1941.							
(d) Excluding mileage of special cars, 10,000 car miles in 1943.							

Table 2							
Motor Bus Lines							
Name of Line	One Way	Bus Miles Operated		Total Passen-		Revenue	
	Route Miles	in 1000's		gers Carried		in Cents	
	1943	1941	1943	1941	1943	1941	1943
<u>Bus Lines in Minneapolis</u>							
Kenwood-St. Louis Park (Minn. St. Ry.)	8.96	603.9	663.9	3.7	5.8	21.9	36.4
Franklin Ave.	4.24	250.5	525.6	5.4	7.8	33.4	43.8
Nicollet-Hennepin*	4.37	354.4	409.1	3.7	5.4	37.1	53.7
38th St. Croastown	4.29	342.0	339.8	4.9	8.3	18.3	30.3
Lowry Ave.	5.85	276.2	291.8	3.4	5.6	14.7	26.9
Bryn Mawr	3.75	152.5	174.9	3.5	4.5	20.0	27.4
Kenwood St. Louis Park*							
(Twin City Motor Bus(a))	6.59	-	85.8	-	5.7	-	28.4
West 39th St.	1.23	57.8	56.5	2.3	3.7	8.5	14.5
Humboldt Ave.	1.60	47.4	46.3	1.8	3.2	7.1	14.1
Chicago Ave.	1.59	40.7	45.4	2.9	4.6	11.2	17.9
Robbinsdale (a)	2.20	-	39.7	-	8.5	-	30.8
Minneapolis Air Port (a)	1.20	-	28.7	-	4.6	-	24.4
West Lake (b)	1.75	-	-	-	-	-	-
University Ave.*	(c)	617.7	-	1.6	-	19.6	-
Marshall-Lake*	(c)	389.4	-	1.2	-	14.6	-
<u>Bus Lines in St. Paul</u>							
6th St.-East Ave. Stillwater (d)	18.72	513.6	675.2	2.4	3.3	21.8	30.8
Jackson - So. St. Paul	10.00	389.9	454.5	3.5	5.3	23.0	36.0
Highland Park	5.75	176.8	202.0	3.1	4.9	13.1	22.0
Dale Street	2.40	37.0	43.2	1.8	3.2	6.5	13.9
Western Ave.	.65	12.6	36.7	4.0	6.1	14.5	22.1
St. Paul Air Port (b)	2.08	-	-	-	-	-	-
<u>Suburban Bus Lines</u>							
Glen Lake - Excelsior	20.34	434.7	559.1	1.2	1.9	22.2	36.6
White Bear	13.73	208.4	295.9	1.0	1.8	20.6	34.3
<u>Bus Lines Operating in both Minneapolis and St. Paul</u>							
Interurban		-	49.9	-	5.6	-	40.7
Sightseeing, Chartered & Special Lines		154.6	155.0	-	-	37.3	31.9
Federal Cartridge Co. (a)		-	1,220.6	-	-	-	22.7
System Total - Bus Lines		5,060.1	6,399.6	2.7	3.9	22.1	32.4
% Increase, 1943 over 1941		-	26.3%	-	44.3%	-	46.5%
(a) Operation started in 1942.							
(b) Operation included in other lines.							
(c) Operation discontinued in 1942.							
(d) Includes Suburban operation to Stillwater 263.0 269.4 .6 1.2 15.5 29.3							
* Operated by Twin City Motor Bus Company, no transfers accepted.							

Year	Single	Total	Revenue		Bus
	Track	Bus	Car Miles	Bus Miles	Miles
	Miles	Miles	Operated*	Operated*	in %
	12/31	12/31			of Total
					Vehicle Miles
1929	519.99	139.51	29,350,857	4,434,437	13.1%
1930	522.49	147.03	27,640,223	4,393,078	13.7
1931	523.68	145.95	26,439,873	4,373,378	14.2
1932	476.64	159.24	25,032,081	4,094,953	14.0
1933	475.05	159.64	22,715,240	3,965,137	14.9
1934	473.53	133.27	22,716,746	3,569,914	13.6
1935	472.97	134.46	22,666,217	3,570,750	13.6
1936	472.87	132.57	22,946,672	3,569,834	13.5
1937	472.62	138.32	22,719,100	3,564,614	13.5
1938	458.85	143.89	21,860,732	3,676,889	14.4
1939	453.32	150.24	21,039,029	4,354,502	17.2
1940	446.30	156.94	20,772,198	4,720,324	18.5
1941	445.26	159.14	20,441,940	4,920,661	19.4
1942	444.23	164.50	22,067,727	4,789,765	17.8
1943	444.26	170.70	25,001,560	5,024,495	16.7%

* Not including chartered cars or buses.

The passenger revenues produced by the operation of street cars and motor buses for the same period are indicated below:

Total Passenger Revenue			
Year	Railways		Bus Revenue
	Buses		in %
			of Total
1929	\$12,265,439	\$1,048,284	5.1%
1930	11,220,323	934,668	7.8
1931	9,684,634	787,241	7.5
1932	8,361,820	639,877	7.1
1933	7,430,703	573,056	7.2
1934	7,806,127	601,393	7.1
1935	7,897,599	661,654	7.8
1936	8,459,295	719,634	7.9
1937	8,283,111	695,287	7.8
1938	7,638,873	691,534	8.3
1939	7,499,045	826,074	9.9
1940	7,379,527	935,041	11.2
1941	7,479,789	1,063,932	14.0
1942	9,864,364	1,335,207	13.4
1943	12,390,770	1,744,265	12.5%

Forecasting the post-war period

As Yogi Berra said, making predictions is hard, especially about the future. Yet that was the consultant's

job. Let's see how they did.

Here is their ridership prediction compared to what actually happened.

Year	Revenue Passengers			Bus Passengers % of Total
	Street Cars	Buses	Total	
1929	160,875,805	6,921,777	167,797,582	4.1%
1930	145,034,975	6,389,573	151,424,548	4.2
1931	124,924,579	5,966,890	130,891,469	4.6
1932	107,805,717	5,226,842	113,032,559	4.6
1933	95,724,150	4,663,119	100,487,269	4.7
1934	100,556,351	4,914,609	105,470,960	4.7
1935	101,873,298	5,457,344	107,330,642	5.1
1936	109,243,758	5,951,766	115,195,524	5.2
1937	107,019,105	5,750,365	112,769,470	5.1
1938	98,634,031	5,928,112	104,562,143	5.7
1939	96,810,872	7,577,275	104,388,147	7.3
1940	95,254,153	9,059,466	104,313,619	8.7
1941	95,348,932	10,592,936	105,941,868	10.0
1942	115,696,135	13,288,808	128,984,943	10.3
1943	154,930,669	18,349,428	173,280,097	10.6%

Year	Predicted	Actual
1944	177,352,830	186,222,547
1945	177,352,830	193,857,264
1946	159,617,710	201,527,022
1947	151,636,820	198,921,195
1948	144,055,050	188,408,212
1949	136,852,220	165,250,924
1950	130,009,600	140,441,387

The consultants didn't anticipate the ridership growth that happened in 1944-46. When the actual decline started in 1947, it was initially more gradual than was predicted and ridership was still 88% higher than at the start of the war. One could argue that TCRT's management had reason to conclude that the consultant was overly pessimistic about the future. The consultant also didn't assume any fare increases, but the 10 cent fare actually rose to 11 cents in 1948 and 12 cents in 1949.

In their report the consultants note that their estimate of postwar ridership is "substantially less than the estimate prepared by the company". They based that on the 50% wartime reduc-

tion of downtown auto traffic, and predicted it would take six years for auto traffic to return to pre-war levels. In fact it took eight years, until 1953, for transit ridership to drop to pre-war levels. By then the entire St. Paul side of the streetcar system was gone. One could argue that it would have taken longer if the streetcar system hadn't been so aggressively reduced.

Once the ridership decline got going in 1948 and 1949, it was slightly steeper than the consultant predicted. It accelerated in 1950 due to the draconian service cuts imposed by the new Charles Green management that forced down ridership.

To achieve the results predicted above, the consultants made the following recommendations:

Elimination of all or practically all 2-man streetcar operation.

The carrying out of a reasonable program of conversion of street cars to motor buses.

It's unclear if the word "reasonable" meant total conversion to bus.

However, this recommendation followed.

"Use large capacity substitute vehicles in the conversion of the heavier car lines." This clearly refers to larger buses capable of replacing streetcars one-for-one, so it appears the consultants were recommending conversion of most or all the streetcar lines to bus, but then more tentative language appears. *"If during the next few years the system converts some of its street car operations to motor bus operation, it may be possible to realize a substantial saving in federal income tax by the abandonment and writing off of track and street cars."*

The report concludes with a table that clarifies some of the ambiguous conversion recommendations. It recommends a new 15,000 kw generator for the Main Steam Station, which implies the continued operation of streetcars. However, it calls for all new rolling stock to be buses and recommends buying 525 of them. At the time that would imply keeping somewhere between 100 and 200 old streetcars in operation for at least the next ten years.

What TCRT actually did

TCRT ignored the consultant's recommendation to buy only new buses, not streetcars, by purchasing 141 new PCC cars. This implies that they intended to keep a core of streetcars on the heavier lines. That policy probably led to the 1947 extension of the Nicollet Avenue line, new track on University Avenue and France Avenue, and a couple of other small track improvements.

At the same time as the PCC purchases, TCRT also bought 165 new buses, and in 1948 converted the North West Terminal, Robbinsdale, Rondo-Stryker and portions of the Camden, Arcade and East Maryland Avenue lines to bus.

An alternate ending?

It's interesting to speculate on what would have happened if the predatory Charles Green had not appeared. That clearly set the transit system on a different course and accelerated the switch to buses. It took a concerted effort by Green and the subsequent Ossanna regime to scrap the streetcars so quickly. Indeed Ossanna bragged that it was the fastest conversion in the country. For that reason alone the streetcars would have lasted at least a few more years, perhaps to 1960.

However, there is no reason to believe the Twin Cities were immune to national economic realities. The reality was that the public was deserting public transit in favor of automobiles and there were no public subsidies on the horizon. These were still for-profit companies, although they functioned like regulated utilities. Cities everywhere were converting to bus. By the 1960s almost the only survivors were streetcar lines that were really light rail. They possessed private rights of way, tunnels or subways that gave them a speed advantage simply not available to buses. So they persevered. The Twin Cities had almost none of these right of way advantages. Almost all the mileage was street running in mixed traffic.

By the 1960s public transit had been reduced to a service for the poor and elderly who didn't drive. Ridership continued to decline and it seems unlikely that any management would ignore the obvious cost savings to be had by converting whatever streetcars were left to bus. Indeed, public purchase of the all-bus system in 1970 by the Metropolitan Transit Commission happened because the alternative was wholesale abandonment.



MRA's Streetcar Fan Trips

MSM's predecessor organization was the Minnesota Railfans Association. Organized in 1949, for the next couple of decades it chartered special trips on every kind of train that existed in the Twin Cities metro area, and many of these traveled to the far corners of the state.

From 1949 to 1954 MRA chartered streetcars 13 times and rode over much of the system. These trips tended to be marathons of seven hours or so. Besides lines that were in service, they wandered through the yards of the

streetcar stations and over non-revenue tracks. Often they chartered the 2-man gate cars, which were disappearing from regular service. Other times it was a PCC car and they also chartered the last of the short ex-Stillwater lightweights. Several trips ran the day after a line had been converted to bus. The best known of these was the last one on June 19, 1954, the day after all streetcar service ended.

We can thank MRA for saving car 1300, and for starting our museum back in 1962.

Most of the excursions were run by three TCRT motormen who would later become longtime members of MSM--Ed Nelson, Kirt Blewett and Bob Schumacher. Thanks to Ed, we have notes on quite a few of the trips. Given the railfan tendency to take lots of photos, most trips are well documented.

According to Ed Nelson's notes, there were streetcar fan trips predating MRA beginning in 1944. Here's the list of MRA trips:

May 29, 1949: Gate car 1289 from East Side Station to Hopkins, Fort Snelling, South St. Paul, Mahtomedi, Duluth Station, Selby Tunnel, Snelling yards.

Oct. 16, 1949: Car 1289 from East Side to Como-Snelling via Como, then Snelling to Snelling Station, then Selby to 4th & Broadway, then to Mahtomedi, to Fort Snelling to Lake Street to Hopkins to downtown Minneapolis, to Snelling via University to Como to East Side.

April 16, 1950: Short lightweight car 4 from Lake Street Station to 28th Ave.-56th Street to Franklin to 4th Ave. to downtown to Washington to Broadway, west to 19th & Upton, east to Broadway-Jackson (last day of the Broadway line), then Monroe to downtown, 7 Corners to Lake Street Station.

May 21, 1950: First PCC fantrip. Car 409 from Nicollet Station via Lake Street to Como-Harriet to Hopkins to Hennepin-Lake to Lake-Lyndale to downtown to Interurban to Inver

Grove to Duluth Station, then transferred to car 1622 to reach Mahtomedi. Apparently a dispatching screwup. Back on 409 at Duluth Street to Fort Snelling to Lake Street to Nicollet Station. Only PCC to reach Hopkins and South St. Paul.

May 19, 1951: No chartered car. Members visited the Filtration Plant line, Central Warehouse, and took a Snelling Shops guided tour.

May 20, 1951: PCC 432 from Duluth Station to Mahtomedi, via Selby to Snelling, to Como, to Inter-campus line, to Hopkins to Lake Street to 27th Ave. to Fort Snelling to Duluth Station. Only PCC to ever reach Mahtomedi, Selby Tunnel and Inter-Campus line)

Oct. 14, 1951: Gate car 1271 from East Side to downtown Minneapolis to Fort Snelling, rode Ft. Snelling shuttle, to Mahtomedi, via Como to East Side.

May 18, 1952: Gate car 1271 from East Side, to downtown to Fort Snelling to Burns & English to Duluth



Left: The 7-12-53 trip takes a break on the siding inside the Minnehaha Falls Park loop. Motorman Ed Nelson is standing on the fender.

Right: The same day, car 1269 crosses Minnehaha Creek in Edina after turning on the Brookside loop. Bob Macnie photo.



Station to Ford Plant then downtown Minneapolis via East 25th line to 44th & Oliver N. to Broadway to North Side Station to East Side via Washington. Day after abandonment of Maria-Fort Snelling, Randolph-Hazel Park and Duluth Station.

July 12, 1953: Gate car 1269 from east Side to Como-Harriet (last car over St. Paul portion, abandoned July 11), Inter-Campus, Snelling Ave., Selby-Lake (day after abandonment), Minnehaha Falls, Bryant, Oak-Harriet.

Nov. 1, 1953: PCC 408 Interurban (last car to downtown St. Paul), Fort Snelling, Plymouth-East 25th Street, Bryant-Johnson, Chicago, Oak-Harriet.

March 7, 1954: Gate car 1269 from East Side, Glenwood-4th Avenue (day after abandonment), Monroe, Nicollet-2nd St.

June 19, 1954: East Side cars 1300 and 1775 Oak-Harriet, Como-Harriet, Inter-Campus, University to Snelling Station (day after abandonment of remaining lines).



Above: The 7-12-53 trip pauses in front of Settergren Hardware at 54th Street and Penn Avenue S., end of the Bryant-Penn line. The regular service car has pulled in behind it and will wye and leave first. Jim Kreuzberger photo.

Below left: The 7-12-53 trip traveled the St. Paul portion of the Como-Harriet line the day after it was abandoned, although the segment from Eustis Street to the State Fair was revived during the fair. The group took a break at the Como Park station.

Below right: At Eustis Street on the way back to Minneapolis, it took some work to pry over the seldom-used switch onto the Inter-Campus line.





Above left: The Selby-Lake line was abandoned on July 11, 1953. The next day the MRA special made the last trip over the line and through the Selby Tunnel. Bob Macnie photo.

Above: Going where no PCC has gone before--the 5-20-51 fan trip was the only time a PCC visited the Inter-Campus line, seen here on the St. Paul campus loop.

Below left: That same trip was the only PCC to travel to Mahtomedi, seen here along Hamline Lake near the end of the line.

Below: It was the second PCC to reach Hopkins. This is the cut just west of Blake Road. Jim Kreuzberger photo.





Above: Railfans have a thing about rare mileage, and none was rarer than the freight interchange between the Inter-Campus line and the Minnesota Transfer Ry. It hadn't been used for awhile, so the railfans had to pry open the switch and clear out the flangeways across Eustis Street.

Below: All that effort enabled car 432 to ease ahead a few hundred feet to where this hopper car was parked. Jim Kreuzberger photo.



Above: Essential fan trip equipment--a drink cooler and shovel for digging out flangeways.

Below: This appears to be one of the pre-MRA, post war excursions, at the Ford Plant loop in Highland Park. Bob Schumacher photo.





The 3-7-54 trip, clockwise from left:
 Bottom left: Surrounded by new houses, the 62nd & Nicollet loop lasted only 7 years.
 Top left: The 2nd Street NE line crosses the Northern Pacific's Mulberry Line at 18th Avenue NE.
 Top center: The 2nd Street NE line had four railroad grade crossings, all NP. This is Grand Street NE at 26th Avenue, the brick-yard spur.
 Top right: Southbound on the Nicollet line on Marquette Avenue at 11th Street.
 Bottom right: The trip covered the Glenwood-4th Avenue line the day after abandonment. This is the wye at 48th Street and 4th Avenue S.
 Bottom center: The last block to the Wirth Park wye was on private right of way.







Above: This is the south terminal of the 28th Avenue S. line at 56th Street.

Below: Crossing the Broadway bridge over the Mississippi, with the Grain Belt Brewery in the distance.



The 4-16-50 trip used ex-Stillwater short lightweight #4. It had been converted to a double-ended in 1939 to serve as the backup Fort Snelling shuttle car. All its seats faced the aisle. It was based at Lake Street Station, so the trip began and ended there. This was the last day of the Broadway Crosstown line, where sister short lightweights #1 and 2 had run their last miles. They had been scrapped in 1949.

Above: The fan trip meets the regular Broadway car at Broadway and Jackson Street, the east end of the line. The ramp led up to Central Avenue. Ed Nelson photo.



Above: Car 1289 ran the first two MRA trips in 1949, on May 29 and October 16. Both went to Hopkins and Mahtomedi, so we're not sure which trip this is in Hopkins at the west end of the trestle over the railroads. Bill Olsen photo.



Above: On the way to Mahtomedi, one of the 1949 trips stops at the Henry Street wye and siding in North St. Paul.

Below: The 5-29-49 trip stopped at Fort Snelling and pulled into the Bridge Junction wye ahead of the Fort Snelling shuttle car. Note the passenger waiting room at left. Bill Olsen photo.





Left: The 10-14-51 trip turns on the Willernie wye. This is where the Stillwater line split off to the left. Minnesota Historical Society collection.

Below left: The 10-14-51 trip paused for photos near the Long Lake siding, halfway between Wildwood and North St. Paul.

The 5-18-52 trip traveled over the Maria line the day after abandonment. This is the unusual wye at Earl Street and Burns Avenue. It was single track beyond it on Burns to the end of line at English Street. The transition caused streetcars to run against traffic for a short distance.





Kirt Blewett ran several of the MRA trips. Jim Neubauer photo.



The 11-1-53 trip in PCC #406 was the very last streetcar to downtown St. Paul (see cover photo).

Above: Running south on the Minnehaha line, it has just passed 7 Corners and is on Cedar Avenue. This is where the Green Line crosses Cedar today.

Left: The circumstance of the 11-1-53 trip on the Chicago Avenue line was unusual. The line was converted to bus on July 11, 1953. However, the Minneapolis City Council did not approve it, so TCRT was obliged to run a weekly “franchise” car over the line on Thursday nights until November 28. This “zombie” status made the fan trip possible. This is the south end of the line at 54th Street, with the regularly scheduled bus visible beyond the PCC.



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Leave	From	Leave	Leave
JUNE 14, 1934	CHAMBERLAIN	8:00 AM	8:00 AM
OAK PARKET	8:00 AM	8:00 AM	8:00 AM
UNIVERSITY	8:00 AM	8:00 AM	8:00 AM

2nd Street
 1200
 1775

First Street
 1200
 1775

1st Street
 1200
 1775

1st Street
 1200
 1775





June 19, 1954--the very last trip. All that was left was the Oak-Harriet, the Minneapolis portion of the Como-Harriet and the Inter-Campus. Cars 1775 and 1300 were chartered.

Opposite top left: Under the Washington Avenue viaduct at Chicago Avenue. Above the cars was the railroad entrance to the Milwaukee Road depot.

Opposite top right: The last trip ticket.

Opposite bottom right: Car 1300 pauses atop the bridge over 36th Street just east of Lake Calhoun. Jim Kreuzberger photos.

Above: When the trip reached Snelling Station, the trolley fans dispersed and began collecting souvenirs. This was criticized at the time, but MSM has benefitted from the parts that were obtained. Lowell Wood photo.

Before the Green Line

Here are four views of the University Avenue line from downtown Minneapolis to downtown St. Paul, otherwise known as the Interurban. With PCC cars and rebuilt track with safety islands in St. Paul, it was the next thing to light rail.

Left: Storm clouds threaten in downtown Minneapolis. This is 5th Street in front of city hall, site today of the Government Center LRT station. The art deco Bell Telephone building looms at right. Minneapolis Star-Tribune photo.

Right: The tracks in University Avenue from Rice Street to Dale Street were separated from traffic by concrete curbs, an LRT precursor that was never implemented west of Dale Street. Minnesota Highway Department photo. Both Minnesota Historical Society collection.







Above: This is the west end of the Washington Avenue bridge in 1929, many years before the University of Minnesota contemplated adding a West Bank campus, which eventually replaced this deteriorated neighborhood. Minneapolis Public Schools photo.

Right: Wabasha Street was bustling between 7th and 8th Streets. This was the theater district, interspersed with plenty of retail. The Interurban shared Wabasha with the Como-Harriet, Rice-South St. Paul, Rondo-Stryker and Hamline-Cherokee lines. Kenneth Wright Studio photo. Both Minnesota Historical Society collection.





June 19, 1954, the day after streetcars quit forever, the MRA chartered cars 1775 and 1300 and toured what was left--the Como-Harriet, Oak-Harriet, Inter-campus and the Interurban from Minneapolis to Snelling Shops. They took a break at the Linden Hills station. Frank King photo.



MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM

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